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TAGS: [IS](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: ABU MAZEN ISSUES PRESIDENTIAL DECREE CALLING FOR
PA ELECTIONS IN JANUARY

Classified By: CG Daniel Rubinstein, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. President Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued a decree October 24 calling for PA presidential and legislative elections on January 24, 2010, and calling on the Central Elections Commission (CEC) to begin preparations for elections. During a joint meeting of the Fatah Central Committee (FCC) and the PLO Executive Committee (PLO-EC) the evening of October 23, and later in a speech to the Palestine Liberation Organization's Central Council (PLO-CC), Abbas called on PLO factions to support the decree. He said he was legally required to issue the decree and rejected accusations that this is a tactical move to pressure Hamas. CEC technical advisors told Post that electoral preparations will begin within a week of the decree; they anticipate Hamas will not allow preparations in Gaza. Few of our contacts believe elections are likely to take place by January, absent a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation deal. End Summary.

PRESIDENTIAL DECREE CALLS FOR ELECTIONS

12. (U) Abu Mazen issued a decree, published in the Official Gazette on October 24, calling for PA presidential and legislative elections to take place in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem on January 24, 2010. The decree calls on the CEC and other relevant bodies to begin preparations for elections as of October 24.

ABU MAZEN DEFENDS DECREE, BLAMES HAMAS FOR RECONCILIATION FAILURE

13. (SBU) During a combined meeting of the FCC and PLO-EC on October 23, Abu Mazen told participants that Fatah should begin serious preparations for elections, according to one participant in the session. He reportedly called on all Palestinian factions to support the elections decree, although, he said, he recognized that Hamas probably will not cooperate. Our source said that Abu Mazen admitted that holding elections absent progress in the peace process could be detrimental to Fatah and other PLO factions, and emphasized the need for these factions to work together to make elections happen.

14. (SBU) The next day (October 24), Abu Mazen spoke before a special session of the PLO-CC (an intermediary body between the Executive Committee and the full National Council, which includes members in the diaspora). In his speech, he refuted public accusations that his call for elections undermined reconciliation efforts with Hamas. He said the law requires him to call for elections, and emphasized the legitimacy of elections despite stalled reconciliation talks and the absence of negotiations with Israel. Abu Mazen blamed Hamas for failing to accept the recently-proposed Egyptian reconciliation document, and reaffirmed his commitment to ending the internal Palestinian division. Regarding

negotiations, Abbas told the PLO-CC that Israel must halt settlement activity and recognize progress reportedly made during the Annapolis process in defining the territory occupied in 1967, or else the "peace process would be empty of content." He also accepted personal responsibility for the PA's handling of the Goldstone report.

ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTIES

15. (C) Vladimir Pran, Country Director for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), told Post October 26 that the CEC's first steps in response to the decree would take place o/a November 10. The CEC plans to approach the Ministry of Education to confirm the use of around 1,000 school rooms throughout the Palestinian territories to conduct voter registration. It will also place ads to recruit roughly 3,500 registration staff in the West Bank and Gaza. He said CEC commissioners told him they believe the Ministry of Education will be unable to guarantee the use of classrooms in Gaza, at which point the CEC might announce that it is incapable of preparing for elections. The CEC also fears that Gaza-based staff could be threatened by Hamas, he said. Hamas has already been unwilling to allow CEC staff leave Gaza for training, he said, and CEC commissioners are not inclined to approach Hamas directly to use classrooms in Gaza. Pran and other Palestinian contacts told Post that CEC commissioners do not believe elections will be held on January 24 absent a reconciliation deal between Fatah and Hamas.

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